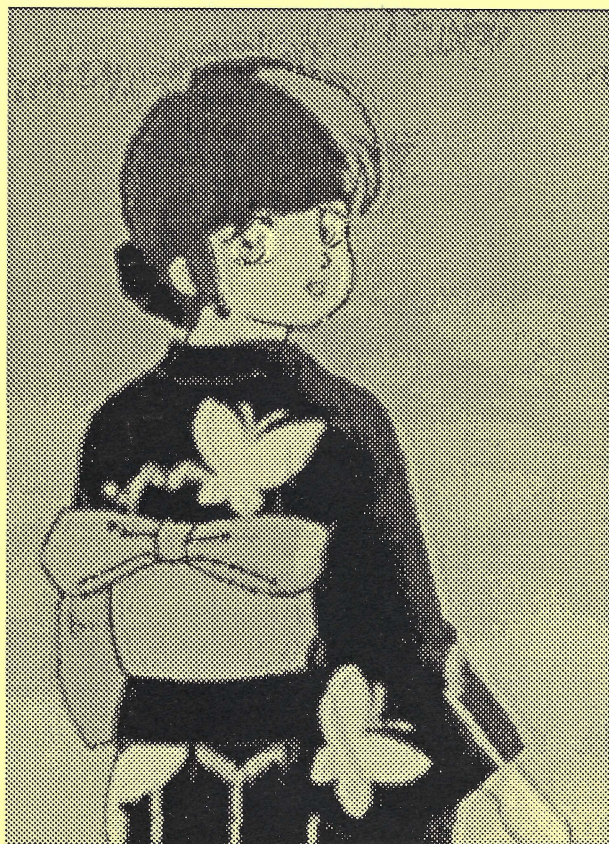


*CJAS Guide to Japanese Language
and Culture
for Viewers of Anime*



β Edition





Guide to Japanese Language and Culture for Viewers of Anime

3 Edition

Acknowledgements

Whenever someone else's work is used, it is credited. If no one is credited at all, that means that it was done by K Hindall. However, no one learns anything by themselves, and the following people have been instrumental in at least one of the entries of this booklet or has discussed Japanese language and culture with me so often that they certainly are a source for at least one thing I've put in here: Bruce Hahne (who also has pieces of his own in here), Heather Howard, Tomoko and Hiroshi Ikukawa, Kay Lillibridge, Mari Morimoto, Miho Nishida, Mitsuhiro Sakai, Masaki Takai, and Tsao Sheng-Te. I've doubtless forgotten someone, and if you're that person, I apologize. Your assistance is no less appreciated!

Introduction

In watching Japanese animation, two major hurdles stand in the way of viewers from parts of the world other than Japan: Japanese language and Japanese culture. While this guide does not even attempt a definitive or comprehensive approach to these two topics, it does present some of the aspects of these fields that are not obvious in a Western context but that are also very common in anime. With the language section, it is hoped that the information therein will increase viewers' ability to understand phrases that are untranslated or too literally translated in scripts and/or synopses. Similarly, the culture section hopes to make the viewer more sensitive to events that are considered too obvious to explain in anime (since the assumed audience is Japanese) but which are necessary to properly understanding the storyline or dialog of many Japanese shows.

Of course, we do confess that with topics as ambitious and complex as these, the possibility of error is ever present and in fact probable. Also, different people - even those with similar levels of experience - may have vastly differing opinions on the same topic. So, as always, let your own experience be your best guide - this is just a little one to get you started.

Language

Romanization: In other words, writing Japanese in the Western (Latin) alphabet (*romaji*, the Japanese call it). This is one of the eventually unavoidable issues of works that contain Japanese words. For this guide, the system is generally Hepburn (since it is extremely phonetic), with one important change. Elongated or "double" vowels are *always* indicated by writing the vowel twice - for instance, an elongated "o" is written "oo" (rather than "ou" as in Hepburn). Elongated "e" are indicated by "ee" regardless of whether the word is of Chinese or Japanese origin. If a source has used some other Romanization system, spellings have been changed to fit this scheme.

Pronunciation: While the Romanization system in this guide is used precisely for its phonetic nature, there are some basic rules of Japanese pronunciation which should be understood. The below have been adapted from *Learn Japanese the Fast and Fun Way*, by Carol and Nobuo Akiyama.

Vowels:
Japanese Vowel

English Equivalent

| | |
|---|---|
| a | as in father (<i>never</i> as in cat). |
| e | as in men |
| i | as in see |
| o | as in boat |
| u | as in food |

More on vowels:

- double vowels are important, so take them seriously. Note in the family address table below that the only difference between the words for "grandmother" and for "aunt" is that one contains a double vowel than is single in the other.
- Sometimes "i" and "u" are not pronounced. This generally happens between voiceless consonants (p, t, k, ch, f, h, s, sh) or at the end of a word following a voiceless consonant. For instance, *sukiyaki* is actually pronounced "skee-ya-kee," and *-shita* (a past tense verb ending) is pronounced "shta." If, however, the vowel is doubled, it is pronounced. If a "u" at the end of a word is preceded by an "s," it is usually not pronounced.

Consonants: You can always use the regular English pronunciation: although it isn't quite right, it is comprehensible to the Japanese. The below notes (with the exception of doubled consonants) are offered less for your own use and more as an aid in recognizing sounds that may be a little different from what you expect.

Japanese Consonant

English Equivalent

f

The English "f" is pronounced with a passage of air between the upper teeth and lower lip. A Japanese "f" is made by lightly blowing air between the lips as if beginning to whistle. English speakers sometimes mistake it for an "h" or a "w."

g

Always hard (as in *go*, not as in *age*). Sometimes you will hear it pronounced "ng" (as in *sing* - a Japanese example is *arigatoo*, the word for "thank you"), but never at the beginning of a word.

j

This tends to be more like the French "j" and therefore more resembles "zh" to speakers of English. It isn't quite, though - think of it as somewhere between the English "j" and "zh."

r

It is debatable whether this is really an "r" at all - it is sort of mid-way between the English "r", "l", and "d." It is made by lightly touching the tip of the tongue to the bony ridge behind the upper teeth, almost in the same position as the English "d." Given this, it is understandable why there is always some debate about whether to transliterate a name containing this sound with an "r" or with an "l," since Japanese has this sound rather than either.

s

Always as in *so*, never as in *his* or *pleasure*.

More on consonants:

Japanese contains double consonants which, unlike English double consonants, are actually pronounced differently than single ones. Like double vowels, the sound is merely held for longer rather than being said twice.

In group/out group: A very basic Japanese notion that doesn't really have a counterpart in English and therefore is very difficult to explain. The biggest problem is that the definition of whom is "in" and whom is "out" changes. As one consultant put it, "these groups shift depending on context, who happens to be part of the conversation, who happens to walk into the room, the phase of the moon, etc." Basically, more polite forms are used to people who are "out" of the speaker's group while more familiar ones are used to those who are "in." For example, if you're talking to the neighbors about your mother, your whole family becomes in-group, the neighbors are out-group, and you'd say "haha" ("my mother"). But when you're talking to your mom, you are in-group and your mom is out-group, so you call her "okaa-san". And of course if you're talking to the neighbors about *their* family then you use the honorific forms. It is to be noted that the Japanese will sometimes deliberately misuse these levels to make a point, such as addressing someone more familiarly than they ought to be in order to insult them.

This notion governs all issues of formality vs. familiarity in Japanese and therefore should be kept in mind while reading the below section on address forms. While that section deals mostly with the "hows" of addressing someone, it is important to realize that the "whys" are in group/out group considerations.

Address Forms: In Japanese, people are addressed by a title much more than in English. Address forms demonstrate not only the relationship between two people but the relative social standing of both the speaker and the person spoken about/to.

Level Indicators: This does not seem to be an official term for them, it just seems a good way of grouping together a number of different usages that indicate the relationship between two people. There are basically three ways of doing this:

- 1) The prefix *o-*, which indicates formality or respect. This can be attached to any family address form and in fact always is if you are speaking about someone else's relations. It is also sometimes added to nouns of more than usual importance: for instance, tea is generally referred to as *o-cha*. It is never added to a proper name.
- 2) Shortening of a person's proper name, which indicates great familiarity and is usually accompanied by *-chan*, the most familiar of the suffixes. An example would be a little boy named Daisuke whose mother might call him "Dai-chan."
- 3) Adding a suffix, which - depending on the one chosen - can indicate a greater or lesser degree of familiarity. This is by far the most prevalent method of indicating the relationship between the speaker and others and is therefore the most complicated. All suffixes can be added to proper names; most can be added to all family address forms (the one chosen depending on the speaker's gender and the preferred politeness level of the family); *-san*, with the occasional *-sama*, is the rule for non-family address forms. The forms are listed below from most to least formal.

-dono. Just about never heard in modern Japanese, it does appear in shows taking place in historical times, where it is the most formal suffix. The one common usage in modern Japanese is within letters, which are always more formal than if the writer was speaking to the addressee, so it will often be attached to the addressee's proper name.

-sama. This is very formal but not very often used. In shows set in feudal Japan, it is basically the equivalent to putting "Lord" or "Lady" before someone's name in English; therefore, the parody of this usage also appears - speaking of a normal person as if they were a lord or lady in order to be humorous. Women will also use it to family members if they live in a fairly formal family. In general, it indicates that the speaker considers the other person to be significantly above his/herself in social status.

-san. The most common suffix. Between adults, the most usual method of addressing a person by far is to attach *-san* to his or her last name. It is also the most often used one in family address forms as well.

-chama. So seldom used that one consultant for this guide thought that it didn't exist until she actually heard it in anime. Slightly more formal than *-chan*, it is apparently used mostly by women and children in families which are a little less formal than most, but not a lot more (and are therefore between *-san* and *-chan*).

-kun/-chan. These are put together here because they occupy very nearly the same politeness level; *-kun* is generally used to males, while *-chan* is generally used to females and small children. It is, however, to be noted that *-chan* can be used to men by women, but it is much less formal than *-kun* (and probably less formal than no suffix at all) in that context. In family addressing, men don't use either of these forms, while women and children may use *-chan* to their relatives regardless of gender. Also note that *-chan* attached to someone's full names (e.g. Hikaru-*chan*) is more formal than addressing her without a suffix (Hikaru) which is in turn more formal than addressing her by a shortened version of her name with *-chan* (Hi-*chan*).

None, i.e. just by a proper name. This is the most familiar (outside of the exceptions noted under *-chan*), and of course using a first name is less formal than using a family name.

There is just one more suffix worth mentioning here, and that is *-tachi*. It does not correspond to a formality level; it is the indication of a plural (used only with people). For instance, *onesan-tachi* would be refer to someone's older sisters. It can be added to a proper name, in which case it means that person and the person(s) who constitute an in group with that person - for instance, they are all somewhere together just now or they are a group of friends that always hangs out together or they are on the same side in a war (depending on which anime you are watching!).

Family address forms: The following chart was compiled by Bruce Hahne from *Japanese: The Spoken Language*, Volume I, by E. H. Jorden (some changes have been made by K Hindall).

Keep in mind when using this chart:

- "Honorific" is the form used when speaking of other people's families and when addressing older members of your own family, and "Generic" is used when speaking about your family to someone else. Older members of a family generally address younger members by given names with no suffix, though small children will often be addressed by a shortened name plus *-chan*. Also, "Older relatives often refer to themselves with the appropriate polite term when addressing children and young people" (*JSL*, p. 311). This is probably to teach kids what the polite forms are.
- Parentheses around an "o" indicate that it is optional, although these are usually omitted by only male speakers to their own family members. Any "o" not in parentheses may not be omitted.
- Asterisks indicate terms which can be used to non-family members of the appropriate ages. For instance, a man might address an elderly woman as "*obaa-san*" ("grandmother").
- *-sama*, *-chama*, or *-chan* can substitute for *-san* if the speaker is addressing a family member. Which suffix is used depends on the speaker's gender, the person addressed, and the general politeness level preferred by the family. If speaking of someone else's family, only *-sama* is a possible (and not very common) substitute.

| <u>Honorific</u> | <u>Generic</u> | <u>English</u> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| *(o)nii-san | ani | older brother |
| *(o)nee-san | ane | older sister |
| imooto-san | imooto | younger sister |
| otooto-san | otooto | younger brother |
| gokyoodai | kyoodai | siblings |
| *oku-san | kanai or tsuma | wife |
| goshujin | shujin or otto | husband |
| musuko-san or *botchan | musuko | son |
| musume-san or *ojoo-san | musume | daughter |
| oko-san | ko or kodomo | child |
| goryooshin | ryooshin | both parents |
| oyago-san | oya | one parent |
| <u>Honorific</u> | <u>Generic</u> | <u>English</u> |
| (o)too-san | chichi or chichioya | father |
| (o)kaa-san | haha or hahaoya | mother |
| *ojii-san | sofu | grandfather or old man |
| *obaa-san | sobo | grandmother or old woman |
| *oji-san | oji | uncle or man |
| *oba-san | oba | aunt or woman |
| oitoko-san | itoko | cousin |
| gokazoku | kazoku | family |

Archaic forms: While these forms are not in current usage, they do appear in anime that takes place in earlier Japanese history and sometimes in fantasy settings as well. The forms below are address forms for certain, other usages we haven't figured out yet (grin). No suffix is added to these forms.

| | |
|----------|---------------|
| chichiue | father |
| haha-ue | mother |
| aniue | older brother |
| aneue | older sister |

Non-family address forms: Below are some of the common ways to address someone by other than his or her name. Unless specified, no suffix is added, if there is a suffix, only the one indicated is the one used. This list is by no means exhaustive!

guji. This is the title by which the head of a temple is addressed. I don't have a literal translation for it.

hime-sama. The proper way of addressing a princess in Japanese and therefore best translates as "Your Highness." Most translations render it as "Princess" (it not being common for people to address princesses in English anymore!), as it is a more literal translation.

mastaa. Generally translated as "Master" (which is where it comes from), it is the way bartenders are usually addressed. The actual names of bartenders appear very seldom in anime, since everyone calls him/her *mastaa*.

Military ranks: There are a number of these, and there is much disagreement about how they should be translated. Therefore, here the most common will only be listed from highest to lowest rank without an attempt to translate them into English.

shogun
kaka
choo
tai
chui

It is to be noted that these are suffixes as well as address forms: for instance, if a man named Nakamura held the rank *tai*, he could be addressed as either "*ta*" or "Nakamura-*tai*." Suffixes are not generally added, but it is still not unusual to hear *-san* occasionally attached (e.g. *choo-san*).

shachoo. Usually translated as "President," this is a common way to address the head of a company or some other such organization.

sempai. Often rendered as "upperclassman," this is really very hard to translate. A *sempai* is someone who has progressed farther than you in some area of endeavor (say, studying karate or Japanese or in school in general) and who may act as your mentor, but who is not of sufficient status to be addressed as *sensee* (see below). So younger or less experienced people will often be heard using it to slightly older, more experienced people - examples being a young fighter pilot using it to an older and more experienced one who is acting as his mentor or a student in a lower grade using it to a student in a more advanced grade. This also can be used as a suffix attached to a proper name.

sensee. Another very hard to translate notion. It generally means a person who is very educated in some sense, even if it is within one specific endeavor, or who teaches anything. So it may be used with equal validity to a medical doctor, a high school teacher or a black belt in a martial art. Due to this general usage, you may hear it translated as "doctor", "teacher" or "master." It can also be used as a suffix on a proper name.

Pronouns: This section will deal with the two groups of pronouns that are most often heard: those that translate to English as "I" and "you." Again, the form chosen depends on in group/out group considerations, gender of the speaker and/or the listener, and the general formality level preferred by the speaker.

The "I" series. By which is meant all pronouns which would be translated into English as the first person singular. The most common of these are (from most to least formal): *Watakushi*, *watashi*, *atashi* (used by females), *boku* (used by males), *ore*. Women generally do not go further down on this scale than *atashi*, which is what they use in the same situations that men would use *boku* or *ore*. Sometimes especially "tough" women will be heard to use these forms, however.

The "you" series. This of course is all pronouns which would be translated into English as the second person singular. These are (again from most formal to least): *annata*, *kimi*, *omai*, *kisama*. *Annata* is the most common; *omai* is used only to very close friends, romantic partners, or small children. *Kisama* is so informal that it is always an insult - in fact, to just say "*Kisama!*" to someone is very like saying "You bastard!" to them in English.

All these forms can have *-tachi* added to indicate "we" or "you" plural.

Common expressions:

(99% of which was done by Bruce Hahne)

Disclaimer: English and Japanese have different sets of ritual expressions which are used for different purposes. In many cases, one can only vaguely approach the meaning of the Japanese expression by substituting an English expression which would be used in a similar context in the west. In some cases, there is no good translation and only examples can be given. It is, naturally, always to your benefit to know the meaning of the *Japanese* expression rather than to memorize some English equivalent under the misplaced hope that the two expressions mean the same thing.

Sources: *Japanese, the Spoken Language*, Vol. I, by Jorden and Noda.
Japanese Words & their Uses, by Akira Miura.

Apologies:

sumimasen. "I'm sorry." Literally, "it never ends," in the vague sense of "what I have done to you is so horrible that my shame and disgrace will never end." Often shortened to *suimasen*. A very casual form is *sumanai*.

gomen nasai. "I'm really sorry." Literally, "(Please) do an excuse", i.e. "(Please) pardon me." This is a stronger apology than "sumimasen."

shitsuree shimasu. "Excuse me (for what I'm about to do or am now doing)," used to apologize for some sort of intrusion. Literally, "(I) do a rudeness." You can use this when stepping between people talking in the hallway, for example. This expression is also what you use when you arrive at your Japanese drill section 10 minutes late. The past-tense form is *shitsuree shimashita* ("excuse me for what I have done"). *Shitsuree* is a casual abbreviation of them both. You can also intensify this by preceding it with *doomo* (see below), yielding *doomo shitsuree shimasu*.

mooshiwake arimasen or *mooshiwake gozaimasen*. "Please forgive me." Literally, "There is no excuse." The second form is more formal than the first. This is a strong apology used regularly when cringing.

Greetings:

ohayoo gozaimasu. "Good morning." Literally, "it is early." A casual equivalent of this is *ohayoo*. Another, cruder equivalent is *ossu*, which is a contraction of *ohayoo gozaimasu*. I believe *ossu* tends to be used only by males to close equals.

konnichi wa. "Good day" or "good afternoon" or, better, just "hello." Literally, "concerning this day." This doesn't have the formal sound that the English "good afternoon" does. Use this when it's too late in the day for *ohayoo gozaimasu*. You **don't** say this when answering the telephone (see *moshi moshi* below).

konban wa. "Good evening." Literally, "concerning this evening/night." Use this instead of *konnichi wa* once it gets to be about dinnertime.

oyasumi nasai. "Good night." This is a casual expression, sometimes used on parting, but in particular said to somebody who is going to sleep. A very casual equivalent is *oyasumi*. The first part comes from *yasumu*, to take a break or to vacation or to relax.

moshi moshi. "Hello?" as said when you answer the telephone. This can also be used in person when you're trying to get through to or get a response from somebody who is asleep, dead, etc. An example comes from *Castle Cagliostro*: in one of the early scenes, Lupin falls off a cliff, and Princess Clarice kneels by him and, shaking him gently, says "Moshi? Moshi?"

hajimemashite. Generally, "how do you do" or "pleased to meet you" are given as English cultural equivalents of this expression, although these are too formal. Maiko (the athletic one with the red hair) says this in the *Karura Mau* movie when introducing herself, but in English you almost never hear a high school girl saying "how do you do." An important note is that you only use this expression the *first* time you meet somebody. Japanese people will look at you real funny if you say it any other time. The word in fact derives from

hajimeru ("to begin," transitive), so the expression comments on the beginning of a relationship.

yoroshiku onegai shimasu. This is another ritual greeting/introduction expression which doesn't translate well at all. Usually translators will give this as "pleased to meet you," although the expression says nothing about being pleased or about meeting somebody. The *onegai shimasu* is the same one mentioned below, and *yoroshiku* comes from *yoroshii*, a fancy word for "good," so the literal expression loosely comes through as "I ask for good treatment from you." A shorter version is *yoroshiku*, which is a nebulous request for goodwill rather than a greeting expression.

Leaving and returning:

sayoonara or *sayonara*. "Goodbye" in the sense of "I'm leaving and I'm not coming back." The best English equivalent is "Farewell," if you're familiar with slightly archaic usages. Say this to your host family in Japan as you walk out the door, and they'll start getting worried.

itte kimasu. "Goodbye" in the sense of "I'm just going for a brief sojourn down to the corner store" or "I'm going to school now." For you closet linguists, *itte* is the gerund form of *iku* ("to go") and *kimasu* is the distal-style form of *kuru* ("to come"). So a more literal translation is "Going, I will come" or "Having gone, I will come."

itte irasshai, often contracted to *itte rasshai*. This is what the other, non-departing person says in response to an "*itte kimasu*."

tadaima. "I'm back." Literally, "Just now." This is what you say after you've come back from the corner store that you were off to when you said "*itte kimasu*" two expressions earlier.

okaeri nasai. "Welcome back." Ritual expression said by the person who stayed home in response to "*Tadaima*."

Example: The four expressions listed above are ritual expressions which work together. The typical pattern would look very much like this:

Kasuga: [Leaving the family apartment to go practice his bad luck with women.] *Itte kimasu!*

Dad: [Reading the newspaper, oblivious to the cat floating through the kitchen.] *Itte rasshai!*

[Kasuga returns, having, during the course of the day, fallen into the lake twice and successfully caught a cold.]

Kasuga: *Tadaima! HAKUSHO!* ["Achoo!"]

Dad: *Okaeri nasai.*

Requests and offers:

doozo. "Please go ahead" or "please have some" or similar phrases. This word is used when one person is offering something to another, so it could be used in situations such as "Please (feel free to) have some candy," "Please, go ahead and take the front seat of the car," or "Go right ahead and feed my manga collection to your pet wolves; I don't mind at all."

onegai shimasu. "Please do this for me." Literally, "I do a request". This is used when asking for favors and also when requesting merchandise. A shortened version is simply *onegai*, which comes out more like a simple "please." This expression is by no means usable wherever English uses "please."

kudasai. This is a little more similar to the English "please," but it never appears without an imperative verb (i.e. you would never just say "*Kudasai*"). For instance, "*Kiite kudasai*" would mean "Please listen." This is the usual polite form, used when in normal everyday conversation and carries less force than the *onegai* form.

Saying thanks:

arigatoo gozaimasu or *arigatoo*. "Thank you (for what you are doing for me or for what you have just done)." The second form is less formal. This is the imperfective (present/future tense) form of the expression, so the emphasis is on the here and now.

arigatoo gozaimashita. "Thank you (for what you have done in the past)." This is the perfective (past tense) form of the above.

doo itashimashite. The closest English equivalents are "don't mention it" or "you're welcome." You can say this after somebody says "*Arigatoo gozaimashita*" to you.

domo. "Thanks." Literally, "in every way." This is casual when you use it by itself, but you can also use it as an intensifier in various ways. In particular, *domo arigatoo gozaimashita* translates roughly as "thank you very much (for what you did)." *Domo* makes a good stock reply to *doozo*, above. The contraction *domo* is more casual. *Domo* can also be used as an apology.

gokuroosama. "Thank you for your efforts or hard work." This expression is said to people who have performed a service which is part of doing their job. For example, you can say this to whoever delivers your newspaper, milk, a package, etc.

Negatives and positives: Not so simple as "yes" and "no," they are actually more simple! First, they don't really translate into "yes" and "no" - the negatives always mean disagreement with the previous statement, whereas the positives always mean agreement. So in places where a Japanese speaker will use, for example, a positive, an English speaker might say "No." In an example from anime, once the queen of a country says to her daughter "You're not forgetting your position as Princess, are you?" to which her daughter answers with a Japanese positive because she is not forgetting it. The proper translation into English, however, is "No."

iie or *ie* or *iya* or *nn*. Negatives. These run roughly from polite to casual as you go from left to right. *Iya* is often lengthened to *iyaa*. The key to *nn* is that the pitch level changes twice as you say it, so ask a native speaker to say this for you if you want to get it right. "*Iya!*" can often be translated as "Forget it!" or "No way!"

dame. "No (good)." This word is often used in the rejection of something, often an idea. Example:

Calvin: Mom, will you buy me a flamethrower?

Mom: *Dame!!*

It is also used as a correction - if, for example a child was to do something or try to do something wrong, a parent might respond with "*Dame yo!*"

ee or *n*. Positives. *N* is quite casual. Note that we now have *nn* as a negative and *n* as a positive. The only good way to learn distinguish these is to have somebody say them for you (or to watch lots and lots of KORI!). *N* sounds something like a brief, falling-pitch grunt. If you find *n* versus *nn* obnoxious, remember that English has the close equivalents "uh-huh" and "uh-uh," so we're not immune to this sort of annoyance.

hai or *ha*. Positives. *Hai* is the less formal, more common expression. It has many uses and is sometimes similar to saying "yes," but often some other translation is better. Possible meanings include "Yes, I understand your request or orders," "Yes, you're correct," or "I'm paying attention to what you're saying." Japanese culture uses more conversational feedback than native English speakers usually use, so *hai* is often used in this third meaning as a rough equivalent of a nod or "uh-huh" in English to indicate that the listener is paying attention and processing what the speaker is saying. When not used for this purpose, a good translation often turns out to be "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am." You also use *hai* to answer roll call when your name is called.

yaada. This is an especially emphatic negative (in fact, it is usually used in such situations that would make it best written *YAADA!!!!*). It is a statement of utter refusal which can be translated many ways depending on the situation: "No, I won't!"; "No, it can't be!"; "Stop!"; etc.

Other stuff: Some phrases in any language are specific to that language and don't really translate into others, which may have different phrases on the same occasion or none at all. The phrases below are provided so that even if they are translated otherwise, you will know what is actually being said.

baka. A very popular Japanese insult. It is usually translated as "idiot" or "fool," although some translators feel this is too mild.

hentai. Another popular Japanese insult. It is usually translated as "weirdo" or "pervert" (*hen* means "strange" or "weird").

itadakimasu. English doesn't have any expression for this. It literally means "I receive" and is said before eating when you are not directly responsible for the meal (that is, you didn't make it or pay for it).

otsukaresama deshita or **otsukaresama.** This is a ritual expression which Jorden claims translates as "You must be tired!" You say this to anybody who has just returned from or survived some sort of event or ordeal. This expression seems to be pretty flexible, as demonstrated by this example from *Assemble Insert* (don't worry, we'll see it this year): A young teenager, Maron-chan, has just finished giving a severe pounding to a small army of thieves who use powered armor. As she pushes the entire pile of them out of the 8th-floor window, she says "*Otsukaresama deshita!*", which in this situation perhaps has the connotation of "After a hard day of unsuccessful attempts to rob the art museum and instead getting trounced by me, surely you must be tired!"

omedetee gozaimasu. "Congratulations". This is pretty close to its English equivalent. You can drop the "gozaimasu" for a more casual form.

gambatte. This is translated a large variety of ways. "Hang in there" or "persevere" or even "good luck." You will also hear this sometimes translated as "Do your best!" or "Go for it!" It comes from the verb *gambaru*, "to persist or endure." You can say this to somebody about to take an exam, and it would probably work as the equivalent of the English theater expression "break a leg." When Kiki is trying to rescue Tombo in one of the final scenes of *Majo no Takkyuubin* (Kiki's Delivery Service), the entire crowd is chanting a less formal version of this expression: "Gambare! Gambare!"

shinobi. What the *ninja* called themselves, and therefore sometimes used instead. I believe the translation is something like "shadow people."

sukaishite. Usually translated as "Hang in there!", "Pull yourself together!" or "Don't give up!" In general, consider it an admonishment not to give into some great adversity.

English in Japanese: As you listen to Japanese conversations, very often an English loan word will leap out at you. Don't just assume that it means the same as the English word from which it is derived! While it often does have the same meaning, it just as often has its meaning altered at least slightly. You'll also hear phrases constructed out of English words that aren't used in English, an example being "cheek time," a Japanese term for slow dancing. English has an exotic sound to the Japanese, and so they'll use it occasionally in preference to Japanese terms much the way the British will sometimes use French.

There is also a lot of English of which you probably aren't aware, because the pronunciation has changed so dramatically that these words won't sound like English to you anymore. One example is *patocar*, the Japanese word for a police car, which is originally derived from the English "patrol car."

In short, remember that the characters in anime are speaking Japanese, and not English, no matter what it may sound like to you!

Culture

This section includes holidays, legends, superstitions or any other situation that is immediately recognizable/comprehensible to a Japanese audience but may be lost on others. Again, it is by no means exhaustive; items we've seen occur in Japanese animation are given priority.

Breaking things: If something breaks while a person is using it, this is a sign of bad luck, much like a black cat running across someone's path in a Western film. This is especially true of dishes.

Cherry blossoms. Frequently in anime, there will appear a scene featuring pale pink flowers floating in the air. Cherry trees flower for only about four days every spring. Therefore, to the Japanese, cherry blossoms or petals represent great but temporary beauty, a thought to be kept in mind whenever you see cherry blossoms in a show. Snowflakes have a similar association, just for a different season.

Double suicide: A very common thing for lovers to do in Japanese literature, so it still occurs sometimes in reality. As far as I understand it, the notion is that if the couple dies together, their souls will be joined, and they'll be together forever (in either their next life or in the afterlife, depending on a person's personal beliefs). Therefore, some couples who find it impossible to remain together (for instance, due to parental objections) will do this.

Gestures. Contrary to popular belief, every culture has its own set of these. This is a whole field of study into and of itself, and we hope to expand this section in future editions, but for now here are a few.

first with only pinkie extended. A very explicit sexual gesture. If a man is using this in reference to a woman, he is indicating that they are sexually involved.

hand behind head/neck. This is a sign of embarrassment. Often done while profusely apologizing.

pulling down lower lid with one finger. This is usually but not always accompanied by sticking out the tongue. This is a very strong indication of contempt - so strong in fact that I'm told that proper young ladies do not use this gesture!

sticking out tongue. This is sometimes used in the same context as in the West, but it's also sometimes a sign that someone is kidding (usually done just after your victim reacts badly because they've taken you seriously!).

History. Obviously, there is a lot to Japanese history, and the more you know the better. This topic is (again!) beyond our ability to tackle entirely, but the following are things that even young children in Japan will know - rather the cultural equivalents (in importance) of George Washington, The Boston Tea Party, etc.

Akechi Mitsuhide. A vassal of Oda Nobunaga. He assassinated Oda at Honnoji. He ruled Japan for about three days and then was killed by another vassal of Nobunaga's (Toyotomi Hideyoshi).

Edo. The old name for Tokyo, which was used during the Tokugawa period. (The name was changed to Tokyo during the Meiji Restoration.

Mori Ranmaru. Apparently Oda Nobunaga had a young vassal named Ranmaru who died with him at Honnoji. I'm uncertain as to whether Ranmaru was an actual historical personage or merely a legend, but as he appears in more than one anime about this period, it is best to mention him. Apparently, he was very devoted to Nobunaga and seldom left his side.

Oda Nobunaga. A famous warlord, the first person to unite Japan under one ruler (himself, of course). There is much disagreement (at least in anime!) about whether he was a man before his time or a ruthless dictator. One of his most famous (and disliked) policies was the suppression of Buddhist warrior monks. He was assassinated in 1582 by one of his own men (see *Akechi Mitsuhide*).

Restoration of the Meiji. 1868. The name comes from the that given to the reign of the new emperor of the time (*meiji* comes from words meaning "bright" and "rule"). It marked the end of the Tokugawa shoguns and supposedly restored the Emperor's power. Actually, it marked Japan's adoption of a more Westernized government (it was based on the German government of the time), although the oligarchs responsible for it always asserted that they were restoring ancient Japanese customs from before the reign of the Tokugawa. For this reason, they enjoyed great success among the Japanese people, who believed that they were returning to their roots. Now historians tend to consider the oligarchs of the Meiji period as entirely self-serving and as deliberately hoodwinking the common people. I can't tell from my sources how the average Japanese of today views this event.

Sevigahara, Battle of. 15 September 1600. This was the final confrontation between two warlords, Ishida Mitsunari and Tokugawa Ieyasu for control of Japan. Tokugawa Ieyasu won and begun the famous Tokugawa Shogunate that ruled Japan until the middle of the 19th century (see *Restoration of the Meiji*). The Tokugawa were famous for closing off Japan from outside contact.

Holidays. These are organized chronologically around the year.

New Year's Day. January 1st. Japan's biggest holiday. Everything comes to a dead stop for about five days. Women will wear traditional costumes, and everyone will go to shrines to pray for good luck and happiness in the coming year. Money is tossed from the visitors into the shrines, resulting in mid-air collisions and other visitors being struck. For some reason, there are vandals who delight in damaging the festive outfits the women are wearing, so some women will emerge from the crowd around the shrine with slashes in their kimonos.

Valentine's Day. February 14th. The day of lovers, just as in the West, there is a unique slant on this day in Japan. Japanese girls give chocolate to the boys they like rather than the other way around.

Doll Festival or Girl's Day. March 3rd. Most little girls have a collection of traditional dolls, symbolizing an emperor and his court, and these are displayed, giving this holiday one of its names. These dolls are often family heirlooms, since they can be very expensive. Tea parties and other activities enjoyed by little girls are part of the day's festivities.

Children's Day or Boy's Day. May 5th. Originally, this was Boy's Day, and the family would hang out one paper carp for every son they had and generally celebrate in manners enjoyed by little boys (for instance, they would often receive toy swords as gifts). It was very much the male counterpart of the Doll Festival. Now, it seems that the celebration is geared much more toward children in general, with a carp hung out for each child in the family, etc.

Tanabata. July 7th. There is an old legend that a Japanese girl fell in love with an Ainu man. Their families forbid their love, and the two lovers were always separated by a river. Now they are the stars Vega and Altair, separated by the Milky Way, and they can meet only on July 7th if the weather is clear. The holiday is observed by parties and by tying slips of paper with wishes on them onto a tree.

Fireworks Festivals. During the summer, mostly in August. These are local affairs, done pretty much whenever a town wants to sponsor one. There are also sometimes contests for the best fireworks display. Women will often wear traditional clothing for these events.

Christmas. December 25th. The Japanese do celebrate this, but it tends to be an occasion for parties more than anything else, sort of the way New Year's is in the United States.

Idol stars. These are mostly young, very pretty girls who are singers ... bad ones! Though wildly popular during their careers (hence the term "idol"), these careers are usually extremely short.

Iinazuke. An arranged marriage, which are still quite common in Japan.

Mermaids. While the appearance of the sea people seems to vary more than in the West, one theme runs through all Japanese legends about them: A person who eats the flesh of a mermaid becomes immortal.

miai: Sometimes *o-miai*. This is the traditional first meeting of a couple in preparation for an *iinazuke*. It tends to be a very formal affair held at some nice hotel or restaurant, and each of the prospective partners is usually accompanied by some older relation, often a parent. After a *miai*, either party can withdraw from further marriage negotiations without loss of face. It is understandably an occasion causing much stress and nervousness to the people involved; in fact, there are even self-help books on *miai* (how to increase your odds of its being successful, how to tell if you really like this person, etc.).

Nosebleeds: While there seems to be some disagreement about whether these indicate sexual arousal in a virgin or perverse sexual desires in the general population, it is safe to associate these with lecherous thoughts.

Red thread: This comes from a Chinese legend that was brought over to Japan and which now appears with some frequency in anime. Supposedly a red thread connects one hand of each person to the hand of the person he or she will one day marry. The threads are merely invisible to most mortals.

School life: This very complex and broad topic is definitely outside the range of this guide, and, besides, it's been very ably covered by Maiko Covington. If you don't have her essays, they are included in the CJAS software archives - ask for a copy. Basics about this include that just about all schools have uniforms, the school week is five and a half days (Saturday is the half day), and working part-time jobs is usually forbidden. Exams are usually very difficult, finally culminating in "Examination Hell," also known as the university entrance exams.

Snowflakes. See *Cherry blossoms*.

Sneezing: The Japanese have a superstition that when a person sneezes, it is because someone somewhere is talking about him or her. For this reason, you'll sometimes see in anime a scene where two characters are discussing a third character, and then the scene will cut to the third character who then sneezes.

Speeches of introduction: In Japan, when you are entering a group - a new class or a new work group - you will give a small speech of introduction to everyone present. That's why anime will often show new students standing in front of their new class and talking about themselves.





